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ABSTRACT

A survey of the directors of admission at 12 public and 46 private four-year colleges in Illinois was conducted to determine: (1) whether college credit earned by a student during the senior year of high school was recognized; (2) the areas to which this credit was generally applied; and (3) the factors considered in a decision regarding the transfer of college credit accumulated during high school. Major findings, based on responses from 10 public and 34 private institutions, revealed that while only about half of the colleges had a written policy concerning the transfer of credit earned in high school, 100% of the public and 82% of the private colleges indicated that this credit was indeed accepted. Most of the private institutions and all of the public colleges reported that this credit could be applied to required courses and to elective courses. There was more reluctance, however, to apply this credit to the student's major; only 71% of the private colleges and 90% of the public colleges indicated that they would do so. While private colleges considered the student's grade to be the most important factor in determining whether to recognize credits or not, the public institutions placed more emphasis on the college which granted the credit. The survey report includes a description of the Escrow Program at John Wood Community College which permits seniors to earn college credit at their high school. (JP)

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COLLEGE CREDIT EARNED DURING HIGH SCHOOL: REACTIONS AMONG FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS THROUGHOUT ILLINOIS

BY

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Rationale

Nearly four years ago, John Wood Community College, Quincy, Illinois, inaugurated on a large scale a unique concept in post-secondary education. In order to maximize efficient utilization of existing educational resources, the college secured quality instruction through contractual agreements with area colleges and technical schools. The extent and success of that venture has been explained and documented.[1] During the second year of the college's operation, JWCC initiated the high school Escrow Program, a concept that extends to high school students in District 539 an opportunity to accumulate college credit during the senior year of high school.

Briefly, the Escrow Program enables senior students to combine courses taken for high school credit with college-level coursework. College courses are taught by full-time instructors who teach other classes for high school credit at the participating high school. The instructors, each of whom must possess at least a Master's degree in the subject area taught, are provided with a JWCC course syllabus and are expected to follow the same course content outline and procedures that are used in a traditional JWCC course. At present, JWCC courses such as freshman composition and introductory college algebra are made available to area high school seniors for college escrow credit.

Although the JWCC Excrow Program represents an innovative concept for the participating high schools in the community college

district, the notion to extend college credit to high school students during the senior year is not new. Many such opportunities are now being made available to high school students throughout post-secondary educational institutions. For example, Kankakee Community Junior College in Illinois has an existing escrow arrangement with Central Community High School, Clifton, Illinois.[2] In addition, Chicago City-Wide College several years ago initiated the College Acceleration Program, a program whereby City-Wide faculty members travel to area high schools to teach college courses to college-bound seniors.[3] The notion to extend college credit to qualified high school seniors is not confined to the State of Illinois; many similar opportunities exist throughout other states. Syracuse University, for example, has a nationally recognized program called Project Advance in which the instruction for college credit is provided by carefully selected high school teachers during the regular school day. Project Advance has been in existence over five years, involves some sixty New York high schools, and has extended college credit to over four-thousand high school seniors.[4]

Recent educational literature suggests the advantages of such programs for the participating high schools, the sponsoring colleges, and the high school seniors who take escrow courses.[5] The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, for instance, reported that programs that offer college credit to high school seniors are indeed productive to the extent that programs can broaden the high school curriculum, eliminate duplication between secondary and college courses, and reduce the time required for both a high school and baccalaureate diploma.[6]

In addition, research aimed at describing transferability of college credit earned in escrow has been undertaken. One reported national survey involving over seventy-five post-secondary institutions revealed that ". . . .college credit earned during high school and verified by a regular college transcript appears to be widely accepted by post-secondary institutions across the country. It appears that students are well-advised to take advantage of college-course opportunities during high school."[7]

Even though much information is presently available to demonstrate generally the transferability of college credit earned through the secondary school, little is known about explicit policies and practices concerning the transferability issue among four-year institutions. This investigation concerned the extent of recognition for college credit earned during the senior year of high school among four-year colleges and universities in one state.

Procedures

A questionnaire was designed to elicit answers to the following questions from directors of admissions at four-year institutions within Illinois: (1) Does your institution generally recognize college credit earned by a student during the senior year of high school? (2) If the credit is recognized, in what form is it ordinarily accepted? and (3) What factors are usually considered when a decision is made regarding the transfer of college credit accumulated during high school?

Questionnaires were mailed to the office of Director of Admissions at 58 four-year, post-secondary institutions within Illinois. A total of 12 public institutions (state supported) were

contacted, while 46 private institutions were notified (independent; private affiliation). Of the number mailed to public institutions, 10 were returned (83 percent response rate), while 34 questionnaires to private institutions were returned (74 percent return). Thus the overall response was 76 percent.

Results

When the institutions contacted were asked whether they had developed written policies for evaluating transfer credit earned by entering freshmen who had enrolled in college courses during high school, 35 percent of the responding private institutions and 50 percent of the responding public institutions reported the existence of a written policy. No written policy existed for 59 percent of the private institutions and 50 percent of the public institutions. Two private colleges indicated that they were in the process of formulating a written policy to evaluate college transfer credit earned by high school seniors.

Table 1 reports the extent of recognition for college credit earned by high school seniors among four-year Illinois institutions. When the directors of admissions were asked whether their institutions generally recognize college credit earned by the senior student, 82 percent of the private colleges and 100 percent of the public institutions indicated "yes." A total of 18 percent of the private institutions reported that college credit earned during high school is not recognized. Thus, of all responding colleges, 86 percent of the four-year post-secondary institutions within Illinois recognize this form of college credit.

(insert Table 1 here)

Table 2 reports the methods of recognition among institutions that accept credit within the State of Illinois. Private institutions reported in 89 percent of the cases and public institutions indicated in 100 percent of the cases that the transfer credit could be applied toward "required courses." Credit toward "elective courses" was accepted by 93 percent of the private colleges and all of the surveyed public institutions within Illinois. The four-year colleges that responded appeared slightly more reluctant to accept this form of college credit to be applied in a student's area of concentration or major. For example, only 71 percent of the private and 90 percent of the public institutions indicated that they would award the student credit in his/her area of concentration for college courses taken during the senior year of high school.

(insert Table 2 here)

Table 3 describes factors that are considered by responding Illinois colleges and universities in the decision to accept or reject the transfer of college credit accumulated during high school. In responding to the questionnaire, directors of admissions were asked to indicate, among private institutions, the grade received by the high school senior for a college-level course was listed as the most important factor in the decision. Many private colleges, for example, revealed that a grade of C was the minimum acceptable grade for transferability, and some institutions required the high school senior to have earned a B. The college through which the credit was granted was nearly as frequently listed as an influential factor, as 79 percent of the private institutions that accept high

school escrow credit revealed that this is a major consideration. Among public institutions, the reverse was true; the college through which the credit was granted to the high school senior was the most important determinant of whether the credit would be accepted or rejected (80 percent). Table 3 provides in percentage form the indications of which factors are regarded by Illinois directors of admissions as most important in the decision to accept or reject escrow transfer credit. In addition, the ranking of each factor is provided.

(insert Table 3 here)

Conclusion

Several additional items were revealed by the responses. For example, many institutions (private and public) indicated that high school escrow credit would be accepted provided that the college credit had been earned through an accredited institution. Further, several directors of admissions commented that they would not accept any form of escrow credit that had also been applied toward high school graduation, and this restriction seems to be applied not only in Illinois, but throughout other states as well.[8] Although private institutions in Illinois appeared slightly more reluctant than public institutions to accept college credit earned during high school, there appeared to be no significant differences among private and public colleges in this regard. Private institutions, however, clearly indicated concern about whether the high school senior completes the course on a college campus, whereas this was not a concern of the public institutions.

In conclusion, the data revealed that a clear majority of four-year colleges and universities in Illinois regards course-work taken in escrow by high school seniors as a nontraditional yet legitimate credit option. Within the next five to ten years, as more post-secondary institutions develop programs aimed at the high school senior, it appears likely that many more students will enroll in escrow programs in order to make the transition from secondary school to college. Moreover, provided that sponsoring institutions exercise appropriate controls while expanding the escrow concept, it seems clear that four-year colleges and universities within Illinois will continue to accept college credit earned by high school seniors.

Table 1

RECOGNITION OF COLLEGE CREDIT EARNED DURING SENIOR YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL

	Private	Public	All
Yes	28 (82%)	10 (100%)	38 (86%)
No	6 (18%)	0	6 (14%)
Total Response	34	10	44

TABLE 2

Methods of Recognition among Institutions Accepting Credit

	Private (28)*	Public (10)*	All (38)*
Credit toward required courses awarded	25 (89%)	10 (100%)	35 (92%)
Credit toward elective courses awarded	26 (93%)	10 (100%)	36 (95%)
Credit toward student's area of concentration awarded	20 (71%)	9 (90%)	29 (76%)

*Number of four-year Illinois institutions recognizing credit

Table 3

Considerations Involved in the Decision to Accept or Reject Credit

	Private (28)*, Rank	Public (10)*, Rank	All (38)*, Rank
College through which credit was granted	22 (79%), 2	8 (80%), 1	30 (79%), 2
No. of college credit hours accumulated	9 (32%), 5	2 (20%), 4	11 (29%), 4.5
Grade of student	25 (89%), 1	7 (70%), 2	32 (84%), 1
Type of course	13 (46%), 3	4 (40%), 3	17 (45%), 3
Student major	4 (14%), 8	1 (10%), 5.5	5 (13%), 7.5
High School GPA or percent rank	5 (18%), 7	0	5 (13%), 7.5
Performance on some form of college entrance exam.	3 (11%), 9	0	3 (8%), 9
Whether course was completed on a college campus	11 (39%), 4	0	11 (29%), 4.5
Other	6 (21%), 6	1 (10%), 5.5	7 (18%), 6

*Number of four-year Illinois institutions recognizing credit

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